

DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 071 654

JC 730 024

AUTHOR Ohberg, M. H. G.
TITLE Hiring Junior College Faculty: Operational
Priorities. Social and Academic Pressures Add New
Demands.
PUB DATE [71]
NOTE 11p.
EDRS PRICE MF-\$0.65 HC-\$3.29
DESCRIPTORS *College Faculty; *Degrees (Titles); Disadvantaged
Youth; Educational Research; *Junior Colleges; Post
Secondary Education; Racial Factors; Teacher
Background; *Teacher Employment; *Teacher
Qualifications

ABSTRACT

To examine the factors that operate in the hiring of faculty by community colleges, an experiment was conducted at the peak of the 1971 job rush by three graduating job seekers who were interested in the developmental student and the community college concept. One job seeker was a BS candidate from a predominantly black college; one was a MA candidate from a well-known university; and one was a Ph.D. candidate from a well-known university. Only the Ph.D. had attended a two-year college; all had experience in working with disadvantaged black children and/or college students. No information as to sex, race, or age was offered, and no personal contacts were made. The candidate for the BS degree, who may have been taken as black, received the greatest amount of encouragement and was the only applicant offered the possibility of an interview. The MA applicant received more encouragement than did the Ph.D. As a result of this study, it is concluded that blacks are being sought by community college administrators, perhaps for administrative positions rather than teaching. Thus it appears that the decision to encourage or discourage applicants was made on the basis of expressed characteristic (educational background) and implied characteristic (race). Three tables provide analyses of replies received by the applicants. (DB)

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH,
EDUCATION & WELFARE
OFFICE OF EDUCATION
THIS DOCUMENT HAS BEEN REPRO-
DUCED EXACTLY AS RECEIVED FROM
THE PERSON OR ORGANIZATION ORIG-
INATING IT. POINTS OF VIEW OR OPIN-
IONS STATED DO NOT NECESSARILY
REPRESENT OFFICIAL OFFICE OF EDU-
CATION POSITION OR POLICY

HIRING JUNIOR COLLEGE FACULTY: OPERATIONAL PRIORITIES

Social and Academic Pressures Add New Demands

M.H.G. Ohberg

Northeastern University

The job market squeeze gripped education from behind as that profession busied itself prognosticating how many teachers would be needed to fill vacant jobs. The squeeze came also at a time when certain social and academic pressures were making demands of their own and adding requirements which had not heretofore posed as job qualifications. One social pressure, for example, appeared in the need to improve education for minority groups and to provide role models in key positions; meanwhile the ever-increasing number of persons with advanced degrees presented employers with the opportunity of being highly selective.

Faculties of two-year colleges traditionally have been composed largely of individuals recruited from secondary school faculties outside immediate territories and from masters degree programs of nearby state teachers colleges. In Medsker's 1960 national sample, while masters' degrees predominated, there were approximately equal numbers of faculty at the extremes of the scale, holding no degree on the one hand and the doctorate on the other, with about one-fifth at the bachelor degree level.⁽¹⁾ Clark noted that "the college considers it desirable for a teacher to have proceeded in his own education as far as the master's degree....in a 'subject matter discipline'; past that point, however, lies the danger of the academician."⁽²⁾ At the present moment, the image

ED 071654

JC 730 024

of the Ph.D., from the community college vantage point, appears to be one of orientation toward the university or four-year college, research, anti-vocational faculty and instruction, and anti-teaching in general.

The recent Carnegie Commission Policy Report states flatly that "The training of Ph.D.'s for Community College teaching should be actively discouraged. The research-oriented Ph.D. is highly inappropriate for the community college teacher. Considerable emphasis should be placed on the four-year Doctor of Arts degree as the degree to be attained by those who will assume leadership roles--for example, department chairmen and other administrators--in community colleges. However, community college teachers should be trained at the Master's level, with increasing emphasis on two-year rather than one-year programs."⁽³⁾ This position overlooks the fact that not all institutions offer alternatives, such as the Doctor of Arts degree, for persons primarily interested in higher education or improving teaching skills. Furthermore, the bald assumption that all Ph.D.'s are research oriented and the heavy-handed placement of a veritable master's degree lid on community college teachers have a curiously medieval ring. Had the Commission made an up-to-date effort to identify behaviors of the successful community college teacher, showing how one degree level or another best fitted the pattern, a legitimate case might have been made. In this day of competency-based programming and administrative accountability, something firmer than opinion would appear to be required. For the Ph.D. interested in teaching and in the community college, identification with these concepts becomes a problem of some magnitude. He may find that his years of study and financial sacrifice have resulted in liability instead of asset,

despite the statement sometimes made by community college presidents that they 'hire the person, not the degree'.

Contrary to the view of the Commission, Ikenberry, in a recent issue of the Junior College Journal, expressed the belief that the trend is toward an increase of Ph.D.'s on Junior College faculties as two-year as well as four-year institutions adopt new patterns of behavior consonant with increased democratization.⁽⁴⁾

The past year of faculty hiring was perhaps an unusual one. An unprecedented job market provided an ample supply of candidates at all degree levels and in most subject areas. Many community colleges found themselves in favorable bidding positions, frequently offering salaries which could not be matched by four-year institutions. These two factors provided large numbers of well-qualified applicants while a third served as a built-in screening factor, namely, the need to hire faculty from minority groups. This last consideration appeared to be a political necessity as well as an operational expedient in expanding programs for the developmental student--with the possible exception of colleges geographically remote from large cities.

To examine some of these forces at closer range, a simple experiment was conducted at the peak of the 1971 job rush by three graduating job seekers interested in the developmental student and in the community college concept. The job seekers represented different educational levels and different institutions: the bachelor's degree (BS) candidate came from a college known to serve predominantly black students; the Master's degree candidate (MA) and Ph.D. candidate represented two well-known universities. Of the three, only the Ph.D. had attended a two-year

college. All candidates had had experience in working with disadvantaged black children and/or college students.

Twelve community colleges located in two northeastern states were selected for the study. Each of the three applicants wrote letters of application to each of the twelve colleges, the letters from a single applicant being identical for all of the institutions. All applicants indicated particular interest in teaching in a community college and in working directly with developmental students in a counseling-teaching relationship. Pertinent information as to educational level, graduating institutions, and previous experience with this type of student was given. No information as to sex, race, or age was offered, although each indicated a willingness to come for an interview. The BS applicant had a name unmistakably masculine, the MA applicant, a name unmistakably feminine, and the Ph.D., one which might have been taken to be either masculine or feminine.

On the assumption that recipients of the letters would assume the BS candidate to be black by virtue of school affiliation, and on the basis of previous research, it was hypothesized for this study that encouragement of applicants for community college faculty positions would be given in the following order: bachelor's degree applicant, master's degree applicant, doctor's degree applicant.

As replies from community colleges were received, each applicant responded to those to which an answer was appropriate. No personal contacts had been made up to the time of the conclusion of the study.

Replies from colleges were analyzed in the following ways:

(1) by number of replies received; (2) by length of time required for

reply; (3) by status and rank of the writer; (4) by form of letter; and (5) by degree of encouragement given the applicant. In Table 1 is presented the percentage of returns, the number of days required for reply, and an indication of the status of the respondent. It will be noted that the Ph.D. received replies from all of the institutions contacted, and that mean and median time required for reply were less than for the MA but approximately the same as for the BS applicant. The respondent who replied to the letter from the Ph.D. was most often a dean or his assistant. The BS applicant, on the other hand, while not receiving a reply from one institution, (one, incidentally, remote from any large city) received most of his replies from the college president or his assistant. Most of the replies to the MA came from the dean or his assistant, as had those to the Ph.D., but a longer period elapsed before the answer was typed. The MA applicant received no reply from the same institution which had failed to respond to the BS applicant.

The tabulation of form versus personal letters (Table 2) indicates, as might be expected, that no form letters were issued from offices of the various presidents. The majority of form replies came from deans or their assistants while lesser administrators tended to write personal letters. It is interesting to note that only deans or their assistants failed to reply personally to the BS candidate, raising the question as to whether this group of administrators might be less knowledgeable concerning area institutions serving blacks. If volume of work had precluded personal replies it would appear that the Ph.D. and MA applicant should have received form letters also from this group.

Finally, an indication of interest afforded each of the applicants

by the colleges is shown in Table 3, where it is readily apparent that an inverse relationship exists between degree and encouragement. While no encouragement for present or near-future possibilities was given the Ph.D. by one-half the colleges contacted, none of the colleges communicated this message to the BS applicant. At the other end of the continuum, an invitation to interview, the BS applicant received two offers while the Ph.D. received none. The MA applicant held middle ground--18% actively discouraging, yet an equal percent inviting and encouraging, and a still larger percent indicating that the letter would be kept in the active file. One interesting departure from typical format was the statement from a college president to the BS applicant that his application would be kept on file for "future administrative openings," (italics, mine) although the letter of application had specifically noted interest in working directly with students in a teaching-counseling relationship.

The findings supported the hypotheses in all instances. The candidate for the BS degree who may have been taken as black received the greatest amount of encouragement (hypothesis 1) and was the only applicant offered the possibility of an interview. The MA applicant received more encouragement than did the Ph.D. applicant although less than that received by the BS applicant (hypothesis 2). The Ph.D. applicant received less encouragement than did the other two applicants (hypothesis 3).

From the results of this limited study, the message is clear that blacks are being courted by community college administrators, perhaps for administrative positions rather than for teaching--a point which

bears further investigation. It seems equally clear that the Ph.D. is being told to look elsewhere for employment. The fact that all colleges took the time to reply to the Ph.D. applicant but not to the other two may represent a kind of code which tacitly acknowledges an academic colleague while rejecting him empirically, another subject for future study. Whether the mid-interest position of the female MA applicant is due to discrimination on the basis of sex or to an over-supply of applicants at the master's level cannot be determined from this data.

Limitations of this exploratory study include the small number of applicants and inadequately represented variables of sex, age, and race, as well as the restriction to a single region of the country. The differentiated replies, however, seem to indicate that the decision to encourage or discourage applicants was made by the representatives of the colleges in this study primarily on the basis of expressed characteristic (educational background) and implied characteristic (race). It would seem to imply that the applicant with a doctorate who particularly wants to teach at the community college level will need to do an initial self-selling job through means other than written communication.

UNIVERSITY OF CALIF.
LOS ANGELES

FEB 9 1973

CLEARINGHOUSE FOR
JUNIOR COLLEGE
INFORMATION

1 Medsker, L.L. The Junior College. New York: McGraw-Hill, 1960.

2 Clark, B.R. The Open-Door College. New York: McGraw-Hill, 1960.

3 Carnegie Commission on Higher Education. The Open-Door Colleges. New York: McGraw-Hill, 1970.

4 Ikenberry, S.O. "Governance and the Faculty," Junior College Journal November 1971, pp. 12-15.

TABLE I

Replies to Letters of Inquiry Received by Applicants of Different Educational Status by Percentage of Return, Length of Time Required to Reply, and Status of Respondent

Degree Status of Applicant as of 6/71	Percentage of Returns (n=12)	No. of Days Between Mailing and Date of Typed Reply		Status of Respondent		
		Median	Mean	President or Assistant	Dean or Assistant	Other
Doctorate	100	3	7.5	.30	.50	.20
Master's	.91	6	11.6	.18	.55	.27
Bachelor's	.91	2	7.9	.58	.25	.17

TABLE II
Form of Replies Received by Applicants of Different Educational Backgrounds
from Respondents of Different Status (Percentage of Total Received)

Form of Reply	Respondent Status								
	President or Assistant			Dean or Assistant		Other Administrators			
	D	M	R	D	M	B	D	M	B
Personal Letter	100	100	100	.75	.60	-0-	100	.35	100
Form Letter	-0-	-0-	-0-	.25	.40	100	-0-	.65	-0-
D = Doctoral applicant	M = Master's degree applicant			B = Bachelor's degree applicant					

TABLE III
Analysis of Forms of Discouragement/Encouragement Given Letters of Inquiry
from Applicants of Different Educational Status
(Percentage* of Replies Received)

Degree Status of Applicant as of 6/71	Discouraging re Present and Future Possibilities	Non-Committal or Minimum Information Given	Forms of Discouragement/Encouragement				
			Application Invited but Not Encouraged	Referral of Letter to Active File Indicated	Application Enclosed and Encouraged	College Interested in Pursuing	Indicated Possible Interview
Doctorate n=12	.50	.08	.25	.17	-0-	-0-	-0-
Master's n=11	.18	.18	.18	.27	.18	-0-	-0-
Bachelor's n=11	-0-	.09	-0-	.27	.18	.27	.18

*Figures not rounded for decimals